



Volunteers of America®
Massachusetts

October 21, 2015

Lisette Smith
Chair

Thomas L. Bierbaum
Chief Executive Officer

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to support the "Proposal to allow Post-Release Contact". Allowing volunteers and chaplains the opportunity to extend their services beyond the prison gates would go a long way in reducing the glaring problem within the correctional field which is curbing the recidivism rates.

From 2011 to 2013, I was the Program Director for a US Department of Justice grant named the "Second Chance Act". This grant was designed to curb the recidivism rate of inmates being released from the Norfolk County Jail in Dedham, Ma. Through this grant the Norfolk County Reentry Mentor Program(NCRMP), identified 70 inmates that had the highest rates of recidivism and focused their efforts by providing each inmate with a mentor. Each mentor would meet with the inmate weekly for up to three months prior to their release. During that time the mentor would get to know the inmate and identify the needs of the inmate when they get released. Most of these needs centered around housing, substance abuse, employment and family reunification. Once the inmate was released the mentor-mentee relationship continued for at least another nine months. During that nine month post release period I did not receive any negative information from the mentors or mentees. A follow up was performed by Northeastern University and the results were significant. Overall there was a reduction of over 25% in the recidivism rate for this targeted group.

This program was a success because of the pre and post mentoring period, with a heavy emphasis placed on post release services. The bottom line is that post release volunteers are invaluable to any effort concerning the overall well being of recently released inmates and more importantly the overall safety of the general public.

Sincerely,

Brian Hughes

Program Director-Norfolk County Reentry Mentor Program